



King County

VETERANS AND HUMAN SERVICES LEVY 2008 STRATEGY AREA ANNUAL REPORTS

Strategy 5.5 Facilitate the Homeless Management Information System ("Safe Harbors")

OBJECTIVE

A small amount of Levy funding has been allocated to Strategy 5 for evaluation, systems development and related activities. The goal of this strategy is to use the Levy's financial and technical resources to promote effective, accountable, and coordinated regional management of housing, health and human service resources.

Levy funds allocated through Activity 5.5 help support the Safe Harbors Homeless Management Information System (HMIS). Safe Harbors is a critical tool in determining the nature, patterns, and extent of homelessness in King County, as well as the precise treatment, housing, and supportive service needs of homeless people. Mobilization of Safe Harbors will require modifications to the application to make data entry tasks less complex for providers. It will also require additional training of providers' business and data entry staff on the application and related policies and protocols. Technical assistance will be provided on the most efficient ways to enter timely, accurate, and complete data. An investment of Levy funds, which can decrease over time, will help ensure effective implementation and management of this critical systems tool.

POPULATION FOCUS

While the ultimate focus of this effort will be those who are homeless, and, in particular those using shelter and transitional housing services, the immediate focus of this Levy activity is the homeless housing and service providers who serve them. Safe Harbors receives client and services data from 86 percent of all shelter and transitional beds in King County serving homeless individuals and families.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The Levy's Safe Harbors project will focus specifically on providing resources that will help homeless services providers implement a new and improved Safe Harbors application (Safe Harbors II.) The new application was developed during 2008 and will move into full implementation in 2009. Safe Harbors II (SH II) will be used by all 170 existing emergency shelter and transitional housing programs in King County and expanded to include outreach, permanent supported housing programs, and other ancillary services. Participation in Safe Harbors II is required of all Levy funded projects serving people who are homeless.

PROGRESS DURING 2008

Levy funds have been used to support Safe Harbors with four tasks:

Task 1. Help agencies review and enter current and archival data in the existing Safe Harbors HMIS. Levy funds have been used to hire temporary data entry staff that work with all publicly funded agencies to meet data entry requirements. Agencies demonstrating the greatest need have been prioritized for assistance beginning in January 2009.

Task 2. Augment current agency data collection and services approaches to assist them to move to the new Safe Harbors II HMIS application. Levy funds will be used to provide three



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or four non-profit information technology (IT) specialists to work within agencies as they pilot, then implement the new Safe Harbors II over the course of 2009. The IT specialists will be assigned first to six pilot programs in four agencies as they beta-test the new HMIS. These specialists will perform configuration duties, monitor data, and test data migration. Once the pilots are completed, these specialists will be assigned to the remaining agencies to help them implement the new HMIS.

Task 3. Bring the new Safe Harbors II application on line within 170 participating programs (about 200 users) countywide. In 2009, Safe Harbors staff will work in larger agencies to bring the key personnel up to speed on the new application.

Task 4. Use the improved technology in Safe Harbors II to create new service coordination strategies for individuals and families (including veterans and others in need) across programs and agencies. Beginning in late 2009 or as soon as practical, Safe Harbors will work with programs and agencies to design enhanced coordination strategies based on the capabilities of the new HMIS. Agencies will require enhanced modification of workflows, user interface, and data structure to meet new anticipated service activities. These activities will likely include creating HMIS linkages to services, benefits programs, and other established service systems. County-specific programs for veterans and homeless families will require unique workflows and capacity. There will be contractors costs incurred to develop King County specific applications and workflows.

SERVICES PROVIDED

A new vendor for Safe Harbors II was selected and a contract negotiated in March 2008. The new application was configured and an implementation strategy developed though Fall 2008.

Safe Harbors staff worked with individual agencies throughout 2008 to ensure that their data on Safe Harbors I was current prior to migrating to the new system in early 2009.

The first pilot projects on Safe Harbors II passed User Acceptance testing in December 2008.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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